

Codes of Ethics in professional Spanish translators and interpreters associations. Professionalism vs. invisibility

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Second Forum Theories & Realities
in Translation & wRiting



Index

1. Codes of ethics
2. Invisibility
3. Professionalism
4. Conceiving a new approach to invisibility
5. Bibliography

Warming up...

What does it mean to be faithful in translation and interpreting? Whom or what are we faithful to?

Warming up...

The translator / interpreter must be neutral and impartial regarding the text once he/she has accepted the job.

Codes of ethics

































“[...] codes of ethics are written for the control of translation as a profession, regulating the translator’s relations with other translators, with clients and with questions like official secrets”.

(Pym , 2010: 159)







Codes of ethics (2)

- Professional Spanish Translators and Interpreters Association (APETI);
- Spanish Translators, Interpreters and Proofreaders Association (ASETRAD);
- Spanish Conference Interpreters Association (AICE);
- Translators and Interpreters Association in Aragón (ASATI).

Codes of ethics - contents

	APETI	Asetrad	AICE	ASATI
Advertising				
Job acceptance				
Translation/interpreting activity as a professional				
Translation/interpreting rates				
Relationship with clients				
Relationship with colleagues				
Relationship with the association				
Problem solving				

Codes of ethics –Translation/interpreting activity as a professional

	APETI	Asetrad	AICE	ASATI
Linguistic competence				
Cultural competence				
Knowledge in the field of the source text				
Fidelity to the source text				
Confidentiality				
Impartiality/ neutrality				

Codes of ethics - professionalism

“Translators, in order to survive, must be trusted as translators. They will be trusted (a) if the profession is trusted, (b) if they are deemed to the *bona fide* members of the profession, and (c) if they have done nothing to forfeit this trust”.

(Chesterman, 1995: 152)

Codes of ethics - professionalism

- A professional translator/ interpreter must:
 - Be competent in both languages involved;
 - Be faithful to the source text;
 - Treat the information involved confidentially;
 - Be impartial or neutral towards the text and the parties concerned.

Professionalism: linguistic competence

“The prime guarantee of equivalence—the first point named in the above code, and the first that comes to mind in popular definitions of translation—becomes the translator’s linguistic competence, a space supposedly untouched by active passages of transfer or dilemmas of allegiance. If translation is thus seen as little more than a linguistic phenomenon, it becomes impossible to see why there should be any ethical problems to solve”.

(Pym, 2010: 168)

Professionalism: fidelity to the source text

“The essential problem of translational ethics is not how to translate in any given situation, but who may decide how to translate”.

(Pym, 2010: 160)

Professionalism: fidelity to the source text

“2. *Fidelity in translation.* When adapting [a text] to the target language, the professional will not add, omit or modify anything expressed in the source language and he/she will move away from literalness only when the adaptation demands it.”

(APETI's Code of ethics, Article 3.2.)

Professionalism: impartiality and neutrality

“Since translators cannot help but take position—since even neutral positions have to be created—, their ethics should break with passive non-identity, forcing them actively to evaluate the texts they work on, making them take a major degree of responsibility for the texts they produce”.

(Pym, 2010: 170)

Professionalism: impartiality and neutrality

“1.2. The translator or interpreter will stay impartial regarding the source text. He/she will specially not introduce his/her own or others’ ideological and moral positions when interpreting the source text into the target language.”

(ASATI’s Code of ethics, Article 1.2.)

neutrality

translation / interpreting as
a linguistic activity

**Is the translator / interpreter described in
our codes of ethics invisible?**

Fidelity to the source text

**Is a translator who is neutral, who is
competent in two languages and who is after
all invisible a guarantee of professionalism?**

Or is this what our clients think
or expect from us...?

Invisibility

Venuti's approach:

“It refers to two mutually determining phenomena: one is an illusionistic effect of discourse, of the translator's own manipulation of English; the other is the practice of reading and evaluating translations that has long prevailed in the United Kingdom and the United States, among other cultures, both English and foreign language.”

(Venuti, 1995: 2)

Invisibility

Wendy Leech's approach:

“Invisibility will not be accorded respect for work done or skills required. If people are not aware of what a person does, or how they do it, then they may make unreasonable demands through simple ignorance. Invisibility also means under-appreciation, and therefore poor remuneration which, combined with lack of respect, can lead to poor morale amongst the members of a profession. A lack of status in society will not encourage future generations to enter the profession. Without the support of visible associations, individual practitioners will find it hard to promote their profession and to avoid poor standards affecting their reputation, their ability to find work and the appreciation they receive for their skills.”

(Leech, 2005: 13-14)

Invisibility

Towards **society**:

- Knowledge of the profession

Towards our **clients**:

- “[...] their ethics should break with passive non-identity, forcing them actively to evaluate the texts they work on, making them take a major degree of responsibility for the texts they produce”.

(Pym, 2010: 170)

What is an expert?

- **Expertise studies:**

“Expertise is the property of a person who performs an operation or a set of operations in a limited domain with exceptional results when compared to others capable of performing the same operation.”

(Ericsson & Smith 1991, Ericsson 1996)

- **Expertise research in translation studies:**

“[...] *capabilities* which underlie the performance of human *expert* translators, including extensive domain knowledge, but crucially also heuristic rules that simplify and improve approaches to *problem* solving, metaknowledge and metacognition, and compiled forms of *behaviour* which afford great economy in skilled performance.”

What is an expert?

expertise

Problem solving

Decision making

What is an expert?

“Trust me, because I will translate faithfully your text. I will not omit nor add anything that was not in the source text”.

Or...

“Trust me, because I will make the right decisions so that your text fully accomplishes your needs”.

“I am a professional, not only because I am competent in the languages involved in the translation process, but also because I am responsible for making the right decisions and solving the problems that may arise while translating”.

Fighting invisibility through expertise

- **Visibility during the translation process:** the translator is the expert in this field. He/she must constantly make decisions. Although the client may have the last word, the translator must be taken as a professional because of his/her ability to anticipating problems and assessing during its solving process.

Fighting invisibility through expertise

- **“Neutrality is not natural; it has to be created”** (Pym, 2010: 170): neutrality or impartiality as a concept of passiveness in our codes of ethics may not suit the concept of expert. Once the job has been accepted, neutrality is required as a guarantee of professionalism. However, ideological problems may occur when translation.
- No matter which decision the translator makes, he is not being neutral (to the source reader or to the target one).

Fighting invisibility through expertise

- **Translation as an interlinguistic, intertextual and intercultural activity:** although the client might not conceive translation as such an interdisciplinary activity, translators should make understand the difference between us and experts in languages. Their linguistic competence may be outstanding, but we are experts in communication.

Fighting invisibility through expertise

- **Rethinking the notion of fidelity:** although fidelity is not being confused with literal translation anymore in some codes of ethics (FIT's Translator's Charter is an example), clients may not understand this notion in the same way. By defining professionalism as expertise, we (1) guarantee to treat the source text under our expert condition and (2) to reach the best solutions for that particular job. By doing this, there is no need to discuss whether omitting or adding is not to be faithful to the source text.

Summing up...

- Spanish codes of ethics define professionalism in terms of neutrality, impartiality, linguistic competence and fidelity to the source text. This may differ from our reality as professionals.
- Spanish codes of ethics lack for a real definition of what a professional translator / interpreter is.

Summing up...

- The concept of expertise may be helpful when defining the translator / interpreter as a professional.
- The concept of expertise may be helpful in order to improve the translator's / interpreter's visibility.
- The concept of expertise may be helpful in order to approach ethical problems that our codes of ethics cannot solve or do not completely cover.

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Thank you for your attention!

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